

Extended Health Care Provider Assessment of Special Needs Children (Nursing Role Participation in Team Work)

Physical and Bodily States. Conventionally, this describes what is understood as health today, but is quite different from our view when working with complexity. Our Euro-American culture takes a narrow view, assuming a biological objectivism that reduces health and medicine to an excellence at “fixing the plumbing and reassembling the wires.” On the other hand, ABLE uses the ancient meaning of health, *e.g.*, from the Old English, “haelth (heal),” which is broader and subsumes the collective and systemic as well as the biological and medical. The ABLE health provider uses a biopsychosocial-cultural context that connects bodily states to social and cultural narratives.

A genogram may be helpful to elicit genetic conditions in understanding how family members get along with each other over generations, and to learn the dates of family historical events. Pedigree sketches show squares as men and circles as women. Horizontal lines indicate marital and parent-child relations. Dates of marriages, separations and divorces are written above a slashed line. Many themes of experience as marriage, death, birth, graduation, losses, illnesses, roles, and resilience can be noted. These patterns can give insights leading to changes in attitudes and beliefs. Old and renewed stories can be told, and family trees then become a powerful way to explore these systems and improve understanding of people, things and events.

Some questions asked from this particular genogram include: “What are the patterns of uniqueness, belonging, power, and role models in the family?” “Who are the heroes, heroines, as well as possible scapegoats or ‘black sheep’?” “What about employment, career, academic performance or financial success?” “Where might we find traits of leisure or hobbies?” “Can we find evidence for spiritual expression or other religious identity?” “Who might be regarded as sick or ill or with alcohol or substance use or mental illness?” “In spite of these afflictions, who seemed to bounce back and deal a winning hand in spite of the odds?”

It is appropriate here to have a nurse obtain the weight, height, head circumference, blood pressure and pulse of the client, and to chart them on a graph to show the child’s stage of growth. The Nurse may also be available to help summarize, assess needs and act as a liaison among many possible health providers. He or she may also facilitate an *Individual Health Care Plan*.

The following are reminders of some of the biological systems we attempt to assess in evaluating special-needs children. This may be most helpful for the “health” person consulting with the team.

Growth and Hormones: Short stature and failure to thrive, growth failure, prematurity, small and large for gestational age puberty, and systems review. Possible pediatric referrals for screen: U/A T4/TSH, Lead, CBC/Diff, IGF-1, IGFBP-3, Bone Age,

Lytes/BUN.

Unusual Physical Features: (Beyond family resemblance): small head, skeletal, spine, face, limb, especially hands, and skin abnormalities. Genetic syndrome. Pediatric referral. Fragile-X. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Neurological Status: Responsiveness, strength, coordination and balance, tremor or tics, vision and hearing, headaches, head injury, seizures, and cerebral palsy.

Mental Status: Orientation, arousal, alertness, over/under focus, mood-anxiety, thoughts, feelings and behaviors, suicidal/depression, perceptions or hallucinations, memory and speech.

Autonomic Nervous System: Regulation, gas, constipation, sweating, flushing, belching, drooling, arousal, attention and diurnal rhythms.

Immunity: Sicknesses, regressive coping with stress, fever or rash, hospitalizations, allergies, rheumatoid symptoms, and other immune diseases. Are immunizations up to date? What about school attendance? Is there herbal use?

Confirm Nutrition: Appetite, eating from a variety of food groups? Chronic vomiting or diarrhea, food sensitivity, obesity (weights, lipids and cholesterol, pulmonary function, apnea, BP) calories, mid-morning and afternoon snacks, breakfast, water bottle on desk, multi-vitamin supplements and special diets.

Bodily Functioning: Dental (brushing, preventative flossing, fluoride,) toileting, sleeping (apnea, disruption), enuresis, encopresis, energy, activity menu, vitality, stamina, safety habits, exercise, stress control, relaxation, meditation and yoga.

Medications or Herbal Preparations: These may either help or interfere with learning. Consider what the benefits vs. side effects might be?

Presence of Medical Assets: Health provider, health insurance, and a possible school health plan.

Chronic Conditions Screening: Diabetes (control, HgA1C, fasting Sugar, oximetry), allergies, asthma, accident-proneness.

Exposure: Drugs/alcohol, sex, violence, or harsh discipline.

Summarize: How do these medical/physical features influence other levels of functioning?